TL1653

~~JOSE TIMOR BELO M.P.~~

THE DOCUMENT OF THE EAST TIMOR CATHOLIC CHURCH ON EAST TIMOR NOWADAYS

1. The Church is not a political institution

Based on its authority and duty, neither the Church should be allowed to mix up with poltical affairs, nor has the bond with any political system, it represents a sign and protection of human transedence (Gaudium et Spes, n.76). Apart from that, the Church has no party, it only has the Bible to share with all people in all places and it is open to pluralism, an official option chosen on the basis of human and Christian fellowship.

As mentioned in the Council Doctrine, the priests are councelled not to get involved into political affairs. even the Code of Canon Law reminds the prists : " Don't actively get involved in political parties or any associations, unless required by the official policy of the Church leadership. Thi is highly important in order to maintain the rights of the Church or to promote public interest (Kodes Hukum Kanonik, 1983, kan. 287, paragraph 2). Whatever position is, the Catholic Church in East Timor is to accept the situation chosen by the people of East Timor (Surat Gembala, 1975).

2. Moral Responsibility of the Church

Nevertheless, due to an understanding of human being, with less interest to involve in state politics (Populorum Progressio, Paul VI, n.13), the Church should encompass with the evolution of time, then attempts to interprete it in the light of the Bible (Gaudium et Spes, n.4). As the Church is willing to help people achieving their perfect progress, manifesting public interest to be more humane, the Church has more responsibility to promote justice, peace, love and freedom through its teaching authority in the form of cooperation with all people with good intentions obeying the Teacher's instructions to teach all nations. Therefore the Church has the noble task to disseminate its doctrine on the community and also submitting moral assessment such as political structure whenever the rights of the people or the salvation are required and based on public interest in line with the evolution of time and situation. Implementing its moral and spiritual duty is the main objective of the Church for the East Timorese people. This is the task concerning the people as a fundamental way for the Church (Christifideleslaici n36). Finding and helping people to discover their dignity is the main role, a central role which would unify the duty of the Church and human beings (Gaudium et Spes n.76).

3. The Right to choose for Lay People

As the Christians are living in the world as members of the community, they have the right and duty to determine their choices, also in the field of politics. Having their own political perceptions and determining various government models are part of the basic human rights. The teaching authority of the Church eventually emphasizes on active participation, be responsible for the Christian spirit in social and poltical life. " Being disciples in the community environment is an attemt of absorbing the structure of thinking and the tradition during which one lives with the spirit of Christianity representing the task and burden for lay people suah a manner that had never been approriately implemented by other people (Vatican Council II, Apostolican Actuositatem, n.13).
Pope John Paul II has explicitly said in his suggestions to the laypeople concerning the participation in politics :"to encourage the world structure with the spirit of Christianity in the sense of serving the people and the community, lay peiople can not refuse to participate in politics, as often stated by the General Synode of Priests " everyone has the right and duty to paerticipate into politics, although they are characterised by a variety of form which fulfills one another in every level, function and responsibility" (Christifideleslaici, n.42).
The right to take part into public life is the right which brings benefit to the dignity of human being, because human beings are not only regarded as object of civilian society, but also should be considered as basic subject coupled with the objectives of its society.

4. Concerns expressed by the Church

Regarding the current situation in East timor, the Church espresses its deep concern and worrriness. So far, the Church's view is that happiness and hope, sadness and worrinbess of the people of East Timor represents the happiness and hope, sadness and worriness of the Christ followers. Paralell with this, these elements are also the main concern of East Timorese people and the Catholic Church in East Timor.
The above mentioned elements reflect the concern of the Church nowadays. This highlights the way of life of East Timorese people in which the Timorese people are living under pressure due to the imposition of institutional force , continued excessive control to be particularly affected by violations of the right to life perpetrated by the institution of force against the activities of East Timorese, the establishment of extra judicial institutions

leading to extra judicial killing, extra judicial punishment, torture, arbitrary arrest and illegal detention especially by extra judicial institution,torture and missing people.
The Church also expresses its deep concern over the conditions of ethnic identity, religion and culture which are getting worst on daily basis.

5. Some Suggestions of the Church to solve the question of East Timor.

Whatever the choice is , the Catholic Church in East Timor takes the position of accepting the situation chosen by the people of East Timor (Surat Gembala, 1975). In this situation the Church's suggestion is to hold REFERENDUM. This option is suggested by the Church as it is the most democratic choice which would accomodate all people's aspirations and the hearts and minds of East Timorese people. Nevertheless, if the idea of Referendum is chosen, it is predicted that enormous problems might emerge in the form of bloodshed among East Timorese people. Therefore the Church urges the Government of Indonesia, as the ruling power occupying this territory, to provide great autonomy or considering this territory as a special one. It is suggested that greater autonomy and special status for this territory be granted and be stipulated into effective law. To identify the concept of greater autonomy or special territory, the Church urges the Government of Indonesia to hold a series of dialogue with political groups (old parties) which had ever existed in East Timor. To these political groups, the Church calls them to reconciliate. The Church will open its hands, if asked, to be the mediator for these talks. If the idea of these dialogues is of importance to the Government of Indonesia, the Church will widely open its hands for this possibility.
In this document, the Church calls the Government of Indonesia to reduce its armed forces being deployed in East timor, reduce the number of troops, reduce extra judicial authority, an institution which threatens the East Timorese people.
The church also suggests that a condusive atmosphere, freedom of expressin their voice be granted to the people of East Timor. The Church perceives that the hearts and minds of the people should be respected and be provided with true information on current events without hiding the facts dishonesty.
In reality and historically, the East Timorese people are Catholics, it is suggested that the Church should be given a special place and that the Local Church also be given the freedom to invite Foreign Missionaries in the name of the Univerlasity of the Church.
Nore importantly, the Church urges the Government of Indonesia to genuinely cooperate with the UN Secretary General and the Government of Portugal and resistance groups to allow effective progress towards a settlement of the question of East Timor by holding a series of dialogues in order to achieve a peace, justice and internationally acceptable solution.

6. Concluding Remarks

The document of the East Timor Catholic Church on East Timor nowadays, specially the document to assist in the solution of the East Timor question will be continously made. This is not the last document. The Church takes this position encouraged by the awareness and lotyality for its mission, for the community, for whom the Church was assigned to inform the Truth, Freedom, Peace, respect for human being in the Spirit of the Bible and the Church's Social Doctrine.

Dili, 31 July 1994

Bishop Administrator Apostolic Diocese of Dili.

Mgr. Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, SDB

cc. 1. The Vatican Ambassador to Indonesia
2. File